

WHY RACE SUICIDE WITH ADVANCING CIVILIZATION? A REPLY.

BY STUART OMER LANDRY.

IT SEEMS to me that the answers to this question hitherto submitted—including that of the propounder—are not satisfactory. These several answers have a more or less basis in truth, and at one time Mr. Joseph Lorrens comes very near to what I believe to be the real answer. Rabbi Schindler says the others shot far away from the mark, and suggests that the decrease in the birth rate in civilized countries is the first sign of the decline of present-day civilization. In other words, obeying the law of life, this stage of civilization is reaching its old age and will soon totter, fall, and go the way of those that have gone before.

But is this true? Is our civilization decadent? Is the Caucasian race becoming senile? The question we are discussing, in the form in which it is given, answers in the negative. I submit that we have no facts upon which to predicate an affirmative answer. On the contrary, it appears that we are becoming more civilized, that the world is getting better, and that we are just now entering into this civilization's "Age of Reason." All countries, nations, civilizations, like men, go through the stages of Infancy, Childhood, Youth, Manhood, Old Age, and then Death. So have they always done; so will they continue to do.

But who shall say that our civilization is not just entering its prime? Who will deny that we are just leaving the Age of Faith for that of reason; that we are leaving the dreams of youth to enter upon the duties of Manhood?

Rabbi Schindler asks for a cause, and in his answer states as a cause that which is an effect—the decay of a civilization or nation is an effect—it is caused by something else. I will not dispute that the decay of ancient nations was accompanied by a lowering of the birth rate, and the latter may partly account for the decay, but

what caused the lowering of the birth rate? That is the question.

I think that possibly the low birth rate in France may be accounted for by the fact that so many of her best citizens were killed in the Napoleonic wars, thus leaving only the weak, the lame, the old, the criminal classes—physical and moral defectives—to renew the population. In this connection see David Starr Jordan's able essay, "The Human Harvest."

But taking the Caucasian race as a whole, does it not seem that the so-called race-suicide is simply the operation of a natural law—the law which says that when the struggle for existence is very hard, plants produce more seed and animals reproduce in greater numbers in order to insure the continuance of the species; that when conditions become easier, the struggle for existence becomes less severe, which has the effect of checking propagation? Thus, in India and the East where conditions are severe and the struggle for existence is great, man is prolific. But in the West where civilization mitigates the severities of life and rescues many who would perish under more rigorous usage, the birth rate is naturally lower. So, I conclude that the alleged race-suicide is one of the results of civilization, which has brought about the working of a necessary and automatic law.

Furthermore, I am of the opinion that it is a right and proper law. It is not to the advantage of the race that the population increase too rapidly, because the supplies of food and fuel are limited. Quality, not quantity, is what we want. Hence the question of race-suicide is a mere "bugaboo," but, like Banquo's ghost, it will not be downed.

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